

EPA's Response to the BP Oil Release

EPA's Initial Actions

On April 22, EPA's regional office (covers Louisiana) began preparations to deploy staff to the Gulf Coast area in support of the Coast Guard's response efforts.

EPA began preparations for air monitoring (controlled burning and particulate matter, VOCs from oil on beaches) several days later and continue daily at this time.

On April 23, EPA participated in the National Response Team meeting on the emerging crisis.

Soon after, EPA Administrator Jackson directed the agency's Emergency Operations Center to begin mobilize. She also directed regional staff to plan in Regions 4 and 6 for full scale involvement on the ground and our regional emergency operations centers was activated.

To date, odor complaints from the Gulf Coast have not been attributed to oil release – per EPA sampling.

On April 28th, EPA deployed their twin-engine plane – the ASPECT – to monitor air quality associated with the in situ burn. ASPECT air missions continue to collect chemical, photo and IR (infrared) data in the Gulf Coast area.

April 30th, EPA launches site dedicated to EPA's response efforts. www.epa.gov/bpspill

May 11, 2010 Actions to Date

EPA personnel activated in regions and headquarters: Nearly 150

- EPA posting data results, helpful text, statement on results: www.epa.gov/bpspill

As of May 9, 2010, EPA air monitoring finds that air quality on the Gulf coastline is normal for this time of year.

As of May 5, 2010 water sampling results off the Gulf Coast still indicate that water quality does not pose increased risk to aquatic life.

As of May 5, 2010 sediment sampling results indicate that there may be risks to aquatic life near Plaquemines Parish, LA.

- Administrator Jackson visited Louisiana on May 10 and 11 to participate in a series of meetings and events. On May 10, Deputy Administrator Perciasepe participated in White House meeting w/POTUS.
- On May 12, Mathy Stanislaus and other senior HQ leaders will visit Mississippi to participate in community meeting.
- Press conference with NOAA on dispersants to be held afternoon of May 12.
- Developing internal documents and Qs/As on dispersants and dispersant testing.
- EPA deploying regional intergovernmental, community and tribal liaisons to Houma, LA
- EPA requested that all tests of subsea dispersant use are shutdown until the agency can review any available data. Subsea dispersant operations have stopped, and this phase of the response is awaiting approval from EPA in order to resume. The subsea dispersant plan was posted on the EPA BP spill website on May 9. A 24-hour subsea dispersant test was completed on May 11 and results are expected on May 12.
- EPA established ecological trigger information a “shut down point” of dispersant application, for sea urchins, brine shrimp, rotifers (small crustaceans) microscopic aquatic animal, indicators of the health of a marine environment.
- EPA identified other dispersants (on approved list) if BP runs out of supply. BP: “ample through mid-May”
- EPA Region 4 on standby for fish tissue sampling, (NOAA phone request), no formal request to date.
- Air monitoring ongoing in Regions 4&6

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- EPA plans to increase air monitoring during controlled burning. Several in-situ burns took place on May 6. ASPECT collected data directly over the fire and smoke, and found trace levels of methanol, carbon monoxide, and low molecular weight aldehydes. ASPECT conducted one flight on May 7 to collect data over any burning or dispersant operations. No oil burning operations were observed during the time on station.
 - Air sampling data analyzed every 24 hrs. Reviewed daily for field quality analysis, uploaded to EPA HQ for review.
 - Elevated VOC or PM levels of concern immediately reported, none to date.
 - Venice, LA air monitoring stations were relocated due to increased traffic causing dusty conditions.
 - TAGA buses are serving all the potential affected counties from western Mississippi to Florida. To date no elevations above typical VOC levels for the areas have been observed. TAGA stood down on May 9 because of change in wind direction. TAGA buses will stand down until May 17.
 - ASPECT crew observed the definite edge of a major oil slick approx 20 miles from the Chandeleur Islands.
 - Chalmette operations now have equipment to conduct benzene monitoring if VOC levels exceed the 10 PPM action level.
 - Seven in-situ burns were attempted on May 7; five were successful. No burns took place May 8-10. No burns took place May 11 because of windy conditions.
 - Identified and explained minor data error in reporting elevated levels of hydrogen sulfide. Explanation was added to air data page of epa.gov/bpspill. HQ PIO worked with HQ press secretary and EPA press representative at JIC to respond to media inquiries on hydrogen sulfide data.
- EPA boats arrived at Mobile, LA May 3, 2010. Ongoing coastal zone water/sediment sampling in Reg 4 & Reg 6. Historical Gulf Coast ecological conditions are being established from the National Coastal Condition Assessment and EPA.
- Post-impact water sampling plans are being discussed among EPA, the States with a May 10 completion date; draft plan was expected on May 7.
 - National Coastline Condition Assessment program: directs coastal sampling every four years with state agencies.
 - 5-7 additional FL beach locations set for sampling.
 - Five EPA staff from Region 4 are involved in a multi-agency technical group to work on natural resources damage assessment plans for shoreline assessment.
 - R6 is proposing assistance from OW of the additional of a monitoring/sampling design for near shore marine waters for both R4 and R6. OW will examine similar near shore sampling activities by NOAA to evaluate need.
 - R6 is revising sampling plan to include testing for pesticides and PCBs.
 - R4 and R6 requested that OW develop desk statement on EPA position on NPDES permits from discharges from oil/water separators.
 - On May 7, posted desk statement on dispersants to epa.gov/bpspill.
 - On May 9, posted sediment data from May 1 and 2. Sampling results indicate that there may be risks to aquatic life near Plaquemines Parish, LA.
 - Water sampling plans are being adjusted to include sampling and analysis of dispersant constituents.
- EPA is prepared to assist USCG and LDEQ with shoreline assessment and cleanup and use of near-shore countermeasures.
- Region 6 is anticipating receiving emergency general permit proposal (re Clean Water Act Section 404b) from state of Louisiana for dredging to create artificial barrier island system off Louisiana coast.
- EPA continues oversight of BP's plans to minimize impact to the environment as response teams deploy boom off the coast of LA and stage to deploy rapid response teams to shorelines affected by oil.
- Region 6 is coordinating with USCG to address volunteer training issues.
- EPA reviewed revised waste management/disposal plan submitted by BP, which was approved by Unified Command. BP will begin to execute the plan.

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- EPA Region 4 has a list of possible waste staging areas as research continues on landfill options potential EJ, other surrounding community concerns and issues, and is communicating with state partners.
 - On May 10, EOC solid waste, HQ and Regions 4 and 6 had conference call to discuss EJ concerns regarding waste management facilities. Regional EJ coordinators will identify communities w/EJ concerns based on list of waste management facilities being developed by HQ.
 - EPA is leading a waste group in an established environmental branch of the unified command post.
 - R4 sent revised AL-MS-FL waste plan to state partners and EPA HQ ORCR for comment, and developed preliminary list of facilities that include landfills, hazardous waste-permitted facilities and other potential waste disposal facilities.
 - EPA completed documentation of conditions at six waste staging areas (Biloxi, MS; Pascagoula, MS; Dauphin Island, AL; Orange Beach, AL; Pensacola, FL and Panama City Beach, FL.)
- EPA found no drinking water intakes at risk from oil, researching industrial intakes (not reported to EPA.)
- Regions 4 & 6 have requested 18 additional communications staff to be deployed in 18 counties along the Gulf Coast. Regions 3 and 5 may provide staff.
- EPA maintaining contact and working with Governors of the potentially impacted states.
- EPA Emergency Operations center is fully staffed with air, water, waste, and communications teams to review, and post environmental information for the public as quickly as possible.